

Colonnaded courtyards, red tile roofs evoke the feel of Vizcaya in this 74-year-old Grove mansion.

ALBERT C

A tropical estate rich in history

JO WERNE

and Home Furnishings Writer

"James Deering slept here."

Fanciful as that seems, one Miami couple could hang that sign on the front door of their Coconut Grove house, which predates Deering's curious Vizcaya estate.

Dubbed Four Way Lodge, this tiled villa was built 74 years ago by William J. Matheson, who owned of Key Biscayne.

It's a home rich with the early history of South Florida, including Deering, who may have wintered

here while planning his Italian Renaissance Villa.

Today's owners of Four Way Lodge spent more than a year restoring the house and mining a treasure trove of history in the process.

Not only do they live in a house that's older than Deering's showplace by a few years, but its open courtyard, colonnade and red tiled roof make it seem like a mini-Vizcaya.

Four Way Lodge was built in 1907 while Vizcaya was built between

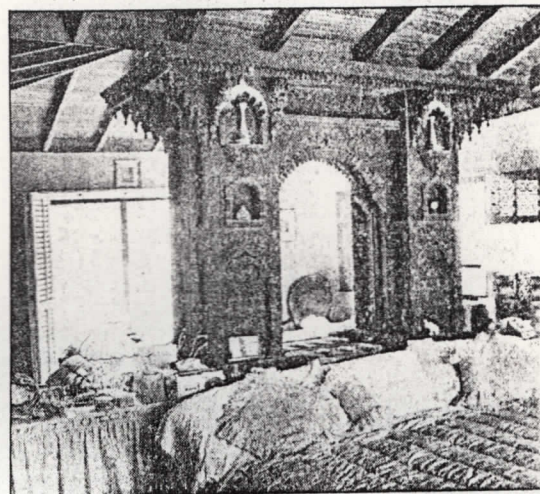
1914 and 1916, according to Don Geyer, a former Vizcaya guide and history buff.

Deering held a conference with architect F. Burrall Hoffman and designer Paul Chalfin in the winter of 1913 to plan his Italian Renaissance Villa.

"It's a good bet that Deering stayed at Four Way Lodge," Geyer said.

The swimming pool built at Four Way Lodge was Deering's "bread

Please turn to LODGE / 1211



A Tibetan altar makes an unusual headboard in the ma-

Colonnades, courtyards and stairways outdoors

LODGE / from 111

and "butter" gift to the Mathesons. Matheson developed four estates in Miami, according to research by the present owners.

Four Way Lodge sat on a 20-acre estate that stretched from Carrollton School (originally the estate "El Jardin") on Main Highway to Biscayne Bay. Matheson sold it to Arthur Curtis James in 1913 for \$150,000.

The Miami Metropolis reported the sale of the house with the headline: *Famous Lady Has Been Sold*.

James and his wife, Harriet Parsons James, who held the title on the house, were good friends of the Mathesons. James was a railroad magnate and yachtsman who had sailed around the world. Mrs. James was known in Newport, R.I., as "The Lady of the Blue Garden" because her garden contained only blue flowers. She also was a generous benefactress to Plymouth Congregational Church, according to church historian Gertrude Kent.

When the 1926 hurricane devastated Miami, Mrs. James lamented the destruction of trees and plants and had many rare specimens brought in to replace them. Rare plants still abound in the neighborhood, according to Geyer who bought the first lot on the estate when it was subdivided in the early 1950s.

The house had been remodeled before the present owners (who wish to remain anonymous) bought Four Way Lodge. But there was plenty to do to make it comfortable for themselves and three of their six sons, who still live at home.

They engaged Miami interior designer Mary Gulash who worked with them on the house a full year before they moved in. The project included updating the electricity, installing a fire alarm and security system, plus an intercom. There was no communication system in the house, which meanders over a good part of an acre.

"There was just a gong," said the owners.

A villa in every sense of the word, Four Way Lodge was designed by architect August Geiger who designed Homestead Public School, Miami City Hospital ("The Alamo," the first building in the complex that would become Jackson Memorial Hospital), and collaborated in the design of the Dade County Courthouse with architect A. Ten Eyck Brown.

The main entrance of the house is reached after passing through a handsome colonnade. Inside are a series of walled courtyards, a walled swimming pool and gazebo, plus tennis courts at the back of the estate.

Gulash discovered that the house has 6,000 square feet of interior space and another 6,000 square feet of enclosed patio area. When the couple wants to take an evening walk, they get plenty of exercise just strolling within the walls of the estate.

The house contains 19 rooms including large living and dining rooms, kitchen, a bedroom and sitting room for the grandfather who resides with them, an office a media room-den, and several bedrooms, each with its own bath plus balcony or terrace.

The master bedroom suite, housed in one of the two-story towers, contains bedroom, sitting room-boudoir, bathroom and "The Tub Room" — a room about the size of a normal bedroom with an oval marble bathtub installed in the middle of a carpeted platform.

One of the charms of the house is that it has no interior stairways. To reach the second-floor bedrooms you must go out into the courtyard and climb exterior stairs.

What does the family do when there's a heavy rain? "We keep umbrellas handy," they said.

A tour of this house starts in the pretty entrance courtyard that is entered through lacy wrought iron gates. Furnished with rattan furniture, this space boasts an antique carved door surround that dates from 1500, according to the owners. Flanked by potted plants, it makes a handsome focal point in the courtyard.

A small powder room, with upholstered walls and tented ceiling in a rich printed fabric, is off the entrance courtyard.

The living room, which measures 12 feet by 24 feet, is entered through double doors off the entrance courtyard. A handsome room now, it was painted a depressing brown when the couple bought the house. Walls were freshened with off-white paint, the tile floor was refinished, and the fireplace wall was mirrored to make the room appear wider. A skilled carpenter hired by the couple made moldings for the fireplace wall to match the existing crown moldings.

The living room windows are fitted with intricately carved wooden shutters, which the couple admired but found a bit impractical.

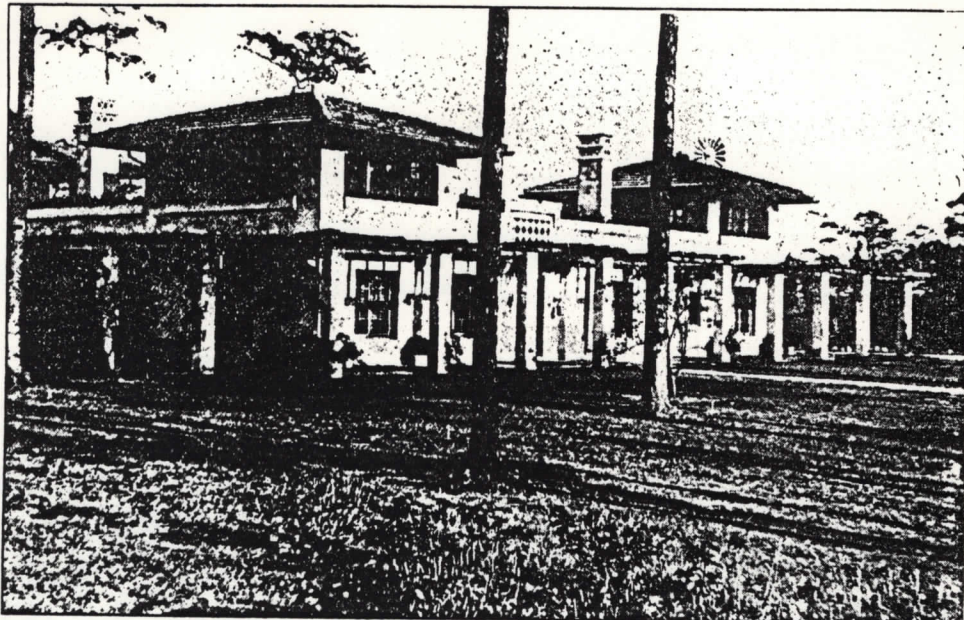
When the shutters were open against the wall, furniture could not fit under. The solution was to have the carpenter split the shutters so that the bottom one-third is closed while the top section is open. White sheer curtains were added to soften the sunlight and provide a bit of privacy when the shutters are open.

The room is furnished in a pleasant mix of old and new furniture. A settee and matching armchairs dating from the East Lake Victorian period, inherited from great-grandparents, were spruced up with upholstery in mauve velvet. Two new ottomans were made to match. Arranged before a large window, the antique pieces go beautifully with the fret-work shutters.

To make the fireplace a focal point of the room, another grouping is arranged before it. New twin sofas upholstered in a celadon shade of green and two armchairs upholstered in white are arranged in a "U" shape on an area rug that has celadon, mauve and white in the design. Mary Gulash found the rug first, then pulled the colors out for the furniture.

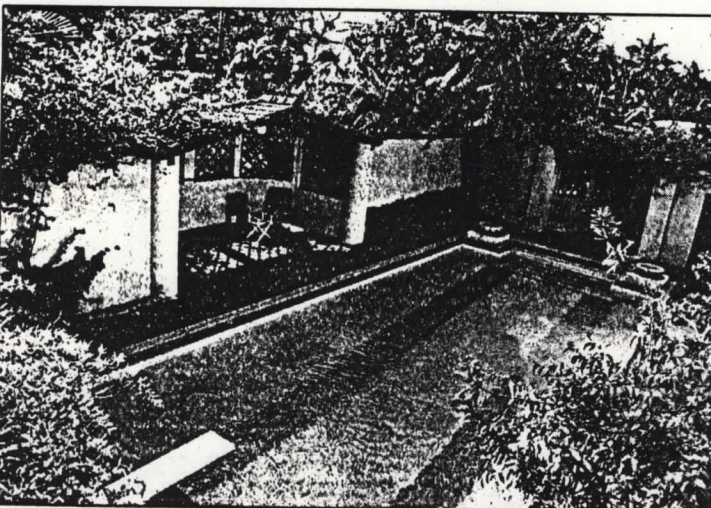
The couple had a handsome pair of antique rose medallion vases converted into table lamps years ago. However, because of their fragility, they had been stored in closets over the years. Gulash found a way to use them in the room. She placed them on end tables adjacent to the fireplace wall so no one can walk around the tables and accidentally bump into the lamps.

The large dining room, which connects to the living room in a



This is how Four Way Lodge looked shortly after William Matheson built the estate.

From Wilderness to Metropolis



ALBERT COVA/Miami Herald Staff

Swimming pool is said to have been a 'bread and butter' gift from James Deering.

sprawling "L" shape, sports six pairs of French doors and a coffered ceiling with mirror inserts. A Mexican tin chandelier had hung in the middle of the ceiling, but the owners thought it inappropriate for the formality of the room. It took about three weeks of shopping before the designer and her clients located three matching crystal chandeliers made in Spain.

The ceiling had to be removed in order to install the chandeliers and

like all remodeling projects, there were surprises.

"We got the glass off the coffered section fairly easily as it had been installed on plywood," Gulash said. "But then we had to break through a couple more ceilings to do the wiring. After that chore we had to replace the ceiling and mirror."

Though the chandeliers are Spanish, the rest of the dining room furniture has an Oriental flavor. The couple chose an ivory-colored

lacquered table with an elaborate design carved into it from the John Widdicomb Co. A dozen lacquered chairs surround the table, which rests on a 10-foot by 18-foot custom made rug in pastel shades.

Though the dining room has a buffet, there was not enough storage for the couple's collection of china, crystal and silver. So Gulash designed a storage unit at one end of the room with deep shelves and mirrored doors. The folding door leading to the kitchen also was

well. The guest bedroom has one of the three fireplaces in the house. It is oolite with a wood chimney that is charred black inside.

A walk past the bedroom wing and down a corridor to the walled swimming pool reveals yet another section of the large house. There is a paneled room with a bar and television where the family entertains friends informally. One wall of this den is bricked and has a round port hole window looking out on the pool.

Adjacent to the den is another room that serves as an at-home office for the father of the family. A complete kitchen is part of this space, making one suspect that it had been a separate apartment at one time.

Two exterior stairways lead to the second-floor bedrooms. On the second-floor level, you can see the red roof tiles close enough to observe that they are wired on in the French style, not cemented in. And the chimneys anchoring the corners of the house are identical to those of Villa Serena, another venerable Miami house.

Like the downstairs bedrooms, the second-floor chambers also have private balconies. The sons who still live at home or return from college at holiday time have all the privacy they want.

The parents, too, have their privacy as a wide balcony extends between the boys' quarters to their own. The master bedroom suite is like a little house in itself: bedroom, sitting, room-boudoir, "The Tub Room," and a bathroom, complete with a washer-dryer unit.

The master bedroom has a beamed ceiling of Dade County pine and a Tibetan altar above the bed. "It came with the house," says the

Lodge was an estate complete with tower

By JO WERNE
Herald Home Furnishings Writer

Nineteen rooms and assorted balconies and courtyards add up to a lot of house. But when Four Way Lodge was in its prime it was an estate in every sense of the word.

In addition to the main house there was a caretaker's house, servants quarters, four-car garage with laundry and superintendent's quarters, and tennis courts.

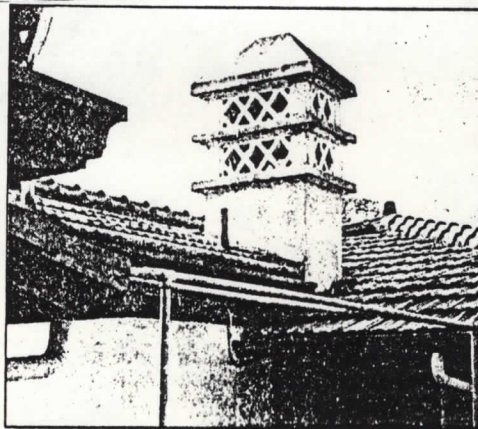
The estate also had a three-story "meditation" tower built on the edge of the bay. Don Geyer, whose house (designed by architect Alfred Browning Parker) rests on the former estate, remembers the tower well.

"It was a landmark for sailors up to the 1950s," he said. "It was made of poured concrete and had a sitting room with a fireplace. There was a staircase to the roof. I was told that it was built for Arthur Curtis James' minister."

By the early 1950s, however, the tower had been vandalized and was in poor shape. It was torn down when the estate was subdivided.

Geyer recalled another story about Arthur Curtis James. In his will, James left \$1,000 to each employee for every year they had worked for him. James' gardener had worked 20 years.

That was a lot of money in those days and the gardener retired on his inheritance.



A close look at one of the towers at Four Way Lodge.

mirrored doors. The folding door leading to the kitchen also was mirrored for a wall-to-wall mirrored effect.

The kitchen was in good shape when the present owners bought the house, but they replaced the existing appliances. Arranged in a "U" shape and with two counters for informal meals, the kitchen is a convenient place to work.

The pantry off the kitchen had an old dumb waiter in it to carry things up to the second floor. The owners decided to use the dumb waiter shaft for installing air conditioning ducts. Gulash also designed additional storage for the pantry.

Just off the kitchen is the apartment and patio where the 92-year-old grandfather resides. He has his privacy yet is close enough for the family to drop in for visits.

One of the pluses of the kitchen is its view of the brick courtyards where a fountain bubbles and flowering vines perfume the air. On the other side of the courtyard is the first-floor bedroom wing consisting of two bedrooms, each with a bath. One has a sauna attached as

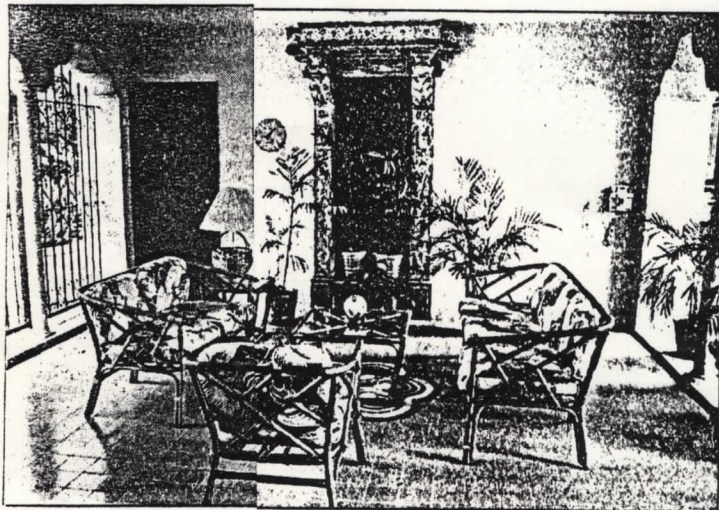
"It came with the house," says the couple who never dreamed of a finely carved Tibetan altar hovering over them at night.

The only thing the master doesn't have is a kitchen — and a long trek down to the kitchen. One gets the munchies late at night. The couple solved this problem by installing a small refrigerator in the boudoir, which they stock with cans of apple juice.

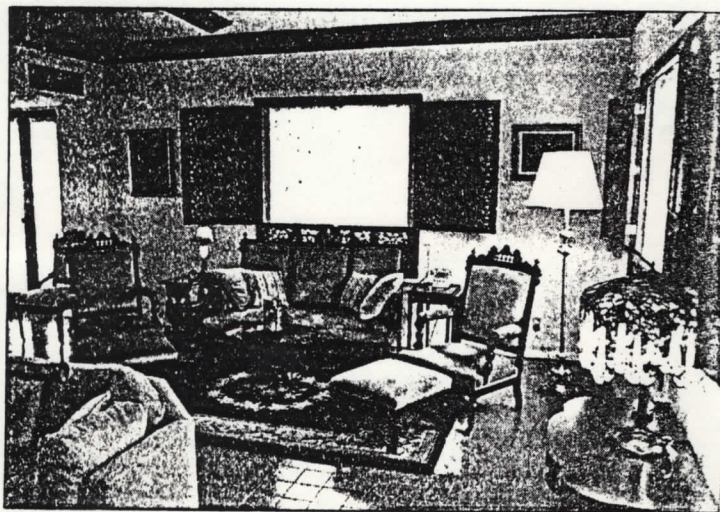
One cannot visit Four Way Lodge for very long when the thought strikes: "This is a lot of house to care for." The couple has a household help and the sons admonished to keep their rooms tidy.

No matter that housekeeping problems, or that one can get drenched reaching an upstairs bedroom, or that the kitchen is a healthy hike away from the master bedroom, this couple doesn't regret for a minute taking on the responsibility of this historic house.

"It's a house that gradually unfolds... there's always a view. Living here is like being in a time machine; you forget what year you are living in."



Entrance patio sports a 15th Century door surround.



Victorian furniture goes with intricately carved shutters in the living room.